

WASHINGTON- Late last night, the Department of Defense notified Congress of its desire to extend the deadline on a multiyear purchasing agreement for F/A-18E/F/G Super Hornets, in response to the so-called "Akin Amendment" that gave them the authority to enter into a multiyear contract for F-18's. Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Expeditionary Forces, released the following statement in response.

"Senior leadership in the DoD is once again dragging their feet on a solution that is good for taxpayers and good for the Navy. Delaying a multiyear procurement of F/A-18's for the second time concerns me greatly. The Navy and Boeing have had plenty of time to negotiate--it is time for the Secretary of Defense to make this deal happen. I am concerned that this may be a defacto decision to ignore the immediate need for new fighters to replace the Navy's fleet of aging F/A-18's. If so, the DoD potentially imperils our nation's maritime strategy and inhibits the Navy's ability to meet the demands of ground forces that rely heavily upon naval air support. Moreover, a multiyear contract for F-18's would save the Navy and taxpayers over half a billion dollars, provide stability for the workforce in St. Louis, and serve as an important insurance policy as the Navy faces a large strike fighter shortfall.

"Our aircraft carriers are one of our nation's most powerful tools for extending presence and promoting peace around the world. Unfortunately, aircraft carriers are not very effective without strike fighters onboard. A multiyear contract would be the first step toward addressing the Navy and Marine Corps fighter shortfall. The F/A-18 Super Hornet is a fantastic airplane that currently provides air dominance for US and coalition forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and around the globe. It is an effective, proven, and affordable solution available today – when our war fighters need it most. I am mystified by the DoD's decision to delay the taxpayer and the war fighter such apragmatic solution to a growing and increasingly complex problem.

"They have had over two years to decide how many aircraft they need to purchase. This decision process seems to involve more dithering than deliberation and I am concerned with the apparent lack of an appropriate sense of urgency."

Congressman Akin has been championing an F/A-18 multiyear contract for over two years as something that benefits taxpayers, the Navy and the St. Louis region. In 2008, Akin inserted language into the defense authorization act requiring the Department of Defense to report to Congress on the potential cost savings of a multiyear contract for F/A-18's. In 2009, Congressman Akin successfully added an amendment to the defense authorization act giving

the Navy the authority to enter into a multiyear contract for F/A-18's.